

SOUTHWEST FISHERIES SCIENCE CENTER
THIRD QUARTER REPORT-FY 2001
For the Period April 1, 2001 - June, 30, 2001

SUBMITTED BY: Lab Director/Division Director/Group Chief: John Hunter, Division Director, Fisheries Resources Division

Title of Accomplishment or Milestone: Report on HMS.

Current Status of Accomplishment or Milestone: Completed many portions and others still in process.

Background: A Fishery Management Plan is under development by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) to assist in managing west-coast based HMS fisheries. The purse seine fishery in the Eastern Tropical Pacific is managed by the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission. The purse seine fishery in the Western and Central Pacific is subject to access rights through the South Pacific Tuna Treaty (SPTT) and to potential management by a newly drafted convention, the "MHLC." The surface hook-and-line fishery for albacore tuna fishes in both the EEZ and in the South and North Pacific, and hence will be subject to the MHLC. The drift gill net fishery harvests swordfish and sharks within the EEZ. A small harpoon fishery harvests swordfish within the EEZ. A small pelagic longline fishery fishes beyond the EEZ. There are also U.S. west coast charter/party boat and sport recreational fisheries that occur in the EEZ and also in Mexican waters. The FMP is intended to allow domestic implementation of the international agreements and to manage fisheries according to the Magnuson-Stevens Act, National Standards, Sustainable Fishing Act, ESA, and MMP within the EEZ and for vessels landing in U.S. ports or licensed on the west coast that fish outside of the EEZ. The FMP requires a significant amount of socioeconomic data compilation and analysis. The SPTT renegotiation requires technical support in the areas of harvesting capacity measurement and economic analyses of management measures. The drift gill net fishery and high seas pelagic longline fisheries are also subject to regulations under two different ESA Biological Opinions for sea turtles, which require supporting Regulatory Impact Review (RIR) and Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA) analyses.

Purpose of Activity: To develop data bases and conduct analyses of regulations for conserving and managing HMS fisheries and related MMPA and ESA topics; to develop a Fisheries Management Plan for West Coast HMS fisheries, serving as Plan Development Team members and federal co-chair; to conduct RIR and RFA analyses as required; and to provide technical support to renegotiation of the South Pacific Tuna Treaty.

Significance of Accomplishment (e.g., to the Center, to Management, and to NMFS Strategic Plan Goals): Conservation and management of U.S. HMS fisheries within the EEZ and throughout the Pacific are an important responsibility for NMFS, and the SWFSC in particular. The PFMC's HMS FMP provides statutory authority for the management of west-coast based HMS fisheries, for the implementation of ESA and MMPA statutes in west-coast based HMS fisheries, and will ensure consistency with the Western and North Pacific Fishery Management Councils in the management of these trans-boundary resources. The South Pacific Tuna Treaty is important to the Southwest Region and the Center, and the MHLC, when signed and ratified, together with the IATTC will form the primary international framework for Pacific-wide HMS conservation and management.

Significance of Accomplishment: The second draft of the HMS FMP has been written and a third is expected to be completed and sent for public review in November, 2001. Two cost surveys have been implemented, one for surface hook-and-line albacore and one for the drift gill net fisheries, and considerable data compilation and checking has transpired, requiring a high degree of coordination with industry and other domestic and international agencies. Work is just beginning on RIR, RFA and community impacts analyses.

Problems: None.

Key Contact: Dale Squires (858-546-7113); Samuel F. Herrick, Jr. (858-546-7111); and Donna Dealy (858-546-7183).